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This issue of the *Carroll Quarterly* is dedicated to the memory of Joseph T. Cotter.

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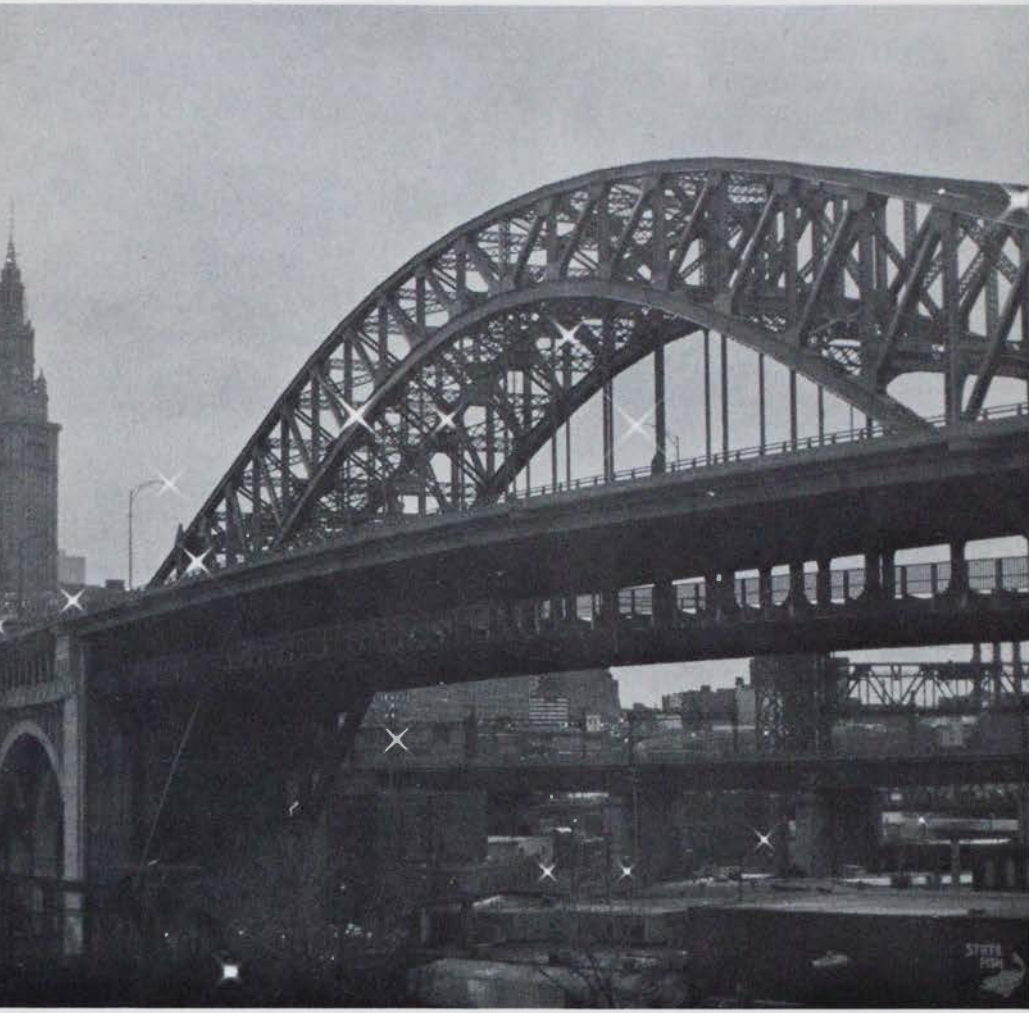

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YEARS, MARCIA

We are crossing water,
feeling with our feet.

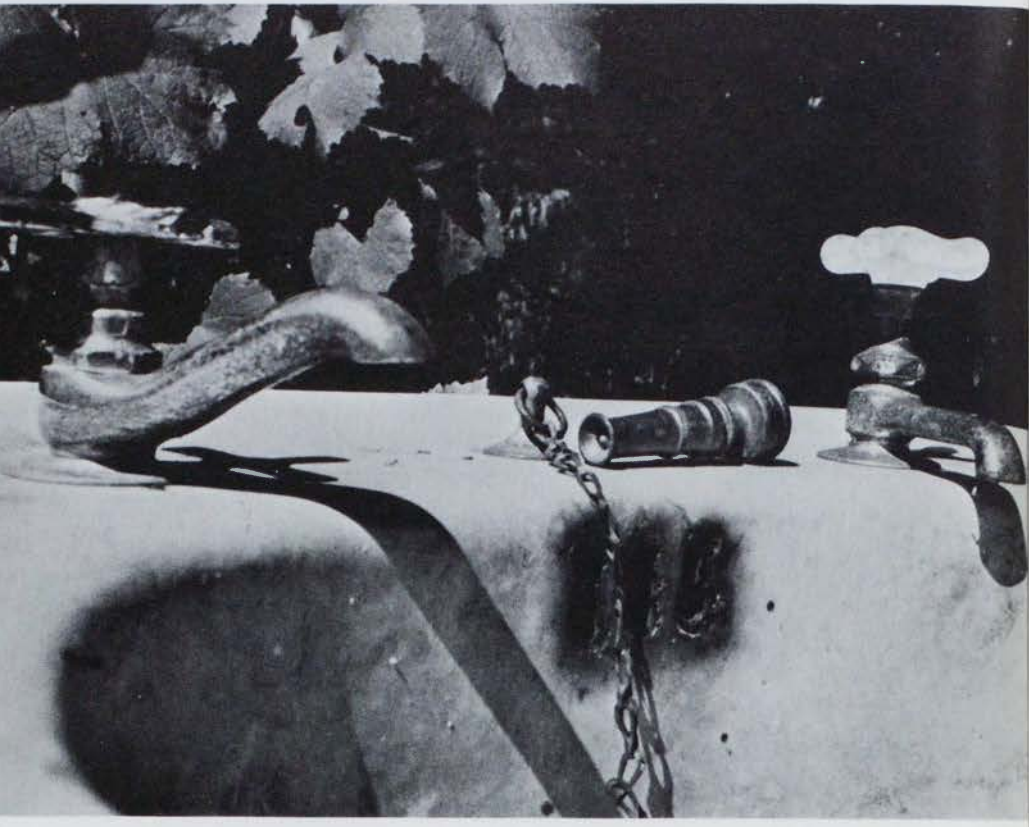
It is a going back,
with lights this time,

and I jump. It takes forever,
swimming in the air,

but this is all like that,
strange.

Falling, I am like this
child I am letting you hold.

And then I have outgrown myself.



BATH

After birth a year
she would float me with her,
pink seal slapping at her flanks,
splashing,
bubbling her eyes to blue stains.

She tells how
she would lapse against cold porcelain
to receive the night's song slowly coming on;
when the moon was a moth's wing
nailed to the window,
how I would ascend her slick skin
to suck at stars.

Then, to memory her womb would quicken
and I would seem to swim again in brine,
queer fish, looped in that dark, internal sky
we both remembered.

MEADOW-WOOD FOREST

Though I was only a child,
I loved to come deep inside you,
run and trip and hide
in your dappled darkness.

Angels guided my fearless play
by keeping the strings ever taut,
quick steps under air-bound friends.
Cloud-peaked elms, maples, and oaks

tickled me with velvet touch,
kissed me with leaves and light,
scolded me with rain and snow.
How soft my hands

found your crystal blood
when thin fingers chased
crimson splashes in the clear stream.
Wise angels loosened their tug.

But builders broke you down;
all was gone
and so I ran
sprinting toward this day,
trampling flower beds,
hurtling uncut emerald fields,
tripping over tangled strings.

THE CARDINAL

As he bustled about
whistling his song down trees
pursuing her into bushes . . .

you clipped dried tips
off rosebush and vine,
found the dead bird
and plotted his plumage
his youthful proud crown
for me to find.

Stuck on weathered wood
wing caught on a nail
—death-flapped—I say
and catch your grin in the window
and my reflection nailed within.

MARY SUE DOBSON

by
Lisa Stevens

She remembered feeling all alone.

Sometimes, they would all play football, touch football, and they'd throw the ball, and then someone would catch it, or drop it. And then they'd throw the ball again. She would watch. They said she was playing. They said, "Why don't you watch the ball?" But instead she watched them. And she felt like she wasn't really there; as if, if she wasn't there, nothing much would change. They would still play football.

Sometimes when they sang, she would not sing. She would watch them sing. They would all open their mouths differently, but they all sounded the same. They were normal and she wasn't, she thought. She thought they would all grow up and be doctors and veterinarians and secretaries and teachers; and they would have families of their own; and she wouldn't. Then they would tell her, "Stop daydreaming and sing." But she couldn't. She couldn't sing like they could.

And sometimes they would sit in a circle on the basketball court in the playground. There were no nets on the basketball hoops, and they never gave out any basketballs. They would sit in a circle and talk about boys. They would each talk about a boy. If they talked about the same boy, there would be a fight. They would call each other names, and whoever made more friends sitting in the circle would get to keep the boy. Then they would find another boy for whoever lost. Everyone would have a boy. They talked about what kind of pants he wore, and if he played football well. They talked about funny tricks he played, and which bus he took home. If the boy had said "Hi," they told that, too. They asked her, "Which boy do you like, or don't you like boys?" But then they'd laugh. They never listened to her. So she never talked about boys, and they laughed anyway.

Sometimes when they would walk home with her they would draw on the sidewalks. They would draw on the streets, too. They had chalk in their lunch boxes. They all got chalk for Christmas. They would draw pictures of Principal Landers and Miss Simptin. They didn't look like Principal Landers or Miss Simptin, but they would put the names under the pictures, so that's who they were. She never drew pictures. She didn't have any chalk in her lunchbox.

Sometimes at Christmas they would tell stories of Santa Claus. They said he lived where there was snow. They said it was cold all the time where Santa lived. She had never seen snow. It was always warm where she lived. She asked why doesn't Santa live where she lived so he would be warm? And they laughed. She asked why does Santa like snow? She said why does Santa like cold wet things and grandfather doesn't? They laughed again. So she stopped asking questions. She thought if she hadn't asked so many questions she would have gotten chalk from Santa for Christmas.

Sometimes they brought her to a big white building. It was in the city. They took her in a bus. She would sit by the window and look at the trees pass by. When the bus slowed down, so did the trees, and when the bus went very fast, so did the trees. In the white building there were lots of people who wore the same clothes. It was dark in the building. There weren't many windows. She asked why do they wear white like the color of the building? She said she didn't wear green and her house was green. They laughed. They always laughed and she never laughed. Maybe it was like singing with your mouth open. That's what she thought. And she thought she should stop asking questions.

One time they brought her to the building and never came back. They left her there, and she didn't have anything white to wear. She thought perhaps she shouldn't have asked so many questions. She thought it would be different if it snowed. She wished she could laugh.

Sometimes they would make her answer questions. She said she would never answer questions, but she couldn't ask any. They didn't laugh. They said she only had to answer the questions.

Sometimes they would ask her questions and she would nod her head. They told her she didn't have to make her chin hit her

chest. But she did — she wanted to make sure her answer was yes. And when she wanted to say no, it hurt her neck. They said she didn't have to move her neck so much, but she did; she wanted to make sure her answer was no. She thought the questions were easy. No one could help her answer the questions though. She had to answer them by herself.

Sometimes she would draw pictures. She would draw pictures of them. They would give her crayons, and she would draw on colored papers. They would all come and look at the pictures. She asked, "Are they pretty?" They said they were very pretty. And they didn't laugh.

Sometimes they took her outside the white building. They would hold her hand, and she would walk on the streets next to the white building. She asked if she could have a lunch box to take with her. They said they didn't have any lunch boxes. But they gave her a paper bag. They put a piece of chalk in the bag. But she didn't draw on the streets. She kept it in the paper bag. She looked at the trees, but they didn't move at all like they did when she was on the bus.

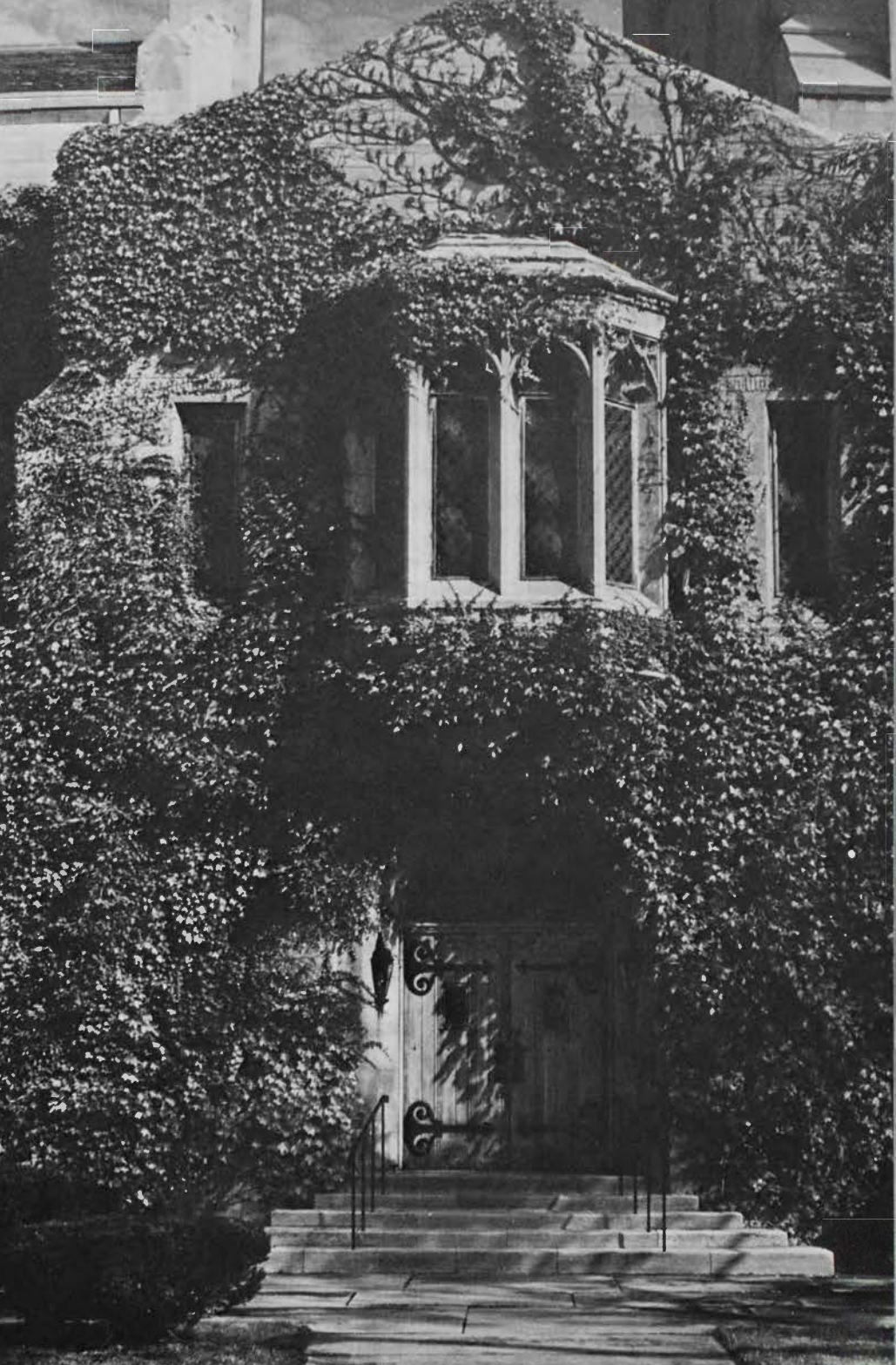
Then she used to go to group therapy. They would all talk, and she could ask questions. No one laughed. When they did, she laughed, too, just like they did, with her mouth open like she was going to sing. They said that they would help her. They said Santa can come when it isn't snowing.

Sometimes she believed them. They said her name was Mary Sue Dobson. They said she drew pretty pictures, and someday she could leave the white building and get a job and have a family. She didn't believe them. She asked if her children would sing. They said she could teach them. They said she could be a good teacher.

CALL ME AMY

Woman, it is you that I think of,
as I walk by the old church.
You, with the blood still fresh on your skirt,
holding the babe hours-old in your arms—
the Amy
that you cradled
from womb to world
and in a struggle of love
rocked from your shore
where she would be christened
in a new life
without you.
Empty-wombed and weak,
so soon a mother in your careful plan,
you walked to the phonebooth
to tell an anonymous world,
to give the babe away.

Woman,
who found it so hard to give birth once—
gave birth twice.



TO MY FIRST SON

And there will be that awful night,
my son,
when the clock
will goosestep each second.
And when you cry "Pa Pa"
there will be no kiss—
just somewhere
the old star
that knew your father's night so well.

MAGGIE'S SONG

When I was sixteen
they called me
Sweet Maggie;
boys danced with me
and I whispered to them
"I'll love you
until I'm bloody."
But when it rained,
they took their shoes
and left me
to darken in the grass
like old wood.

THERE IS NO MOON

by

Lisa Stevens

The electricity was turned off long ago in this abandoned high rise. Room B-11's two windows overlook the alley between this building and the high rise across from it. No one walks through the alley anymore. The trash cans that border the buildings overflow with garbage that is over three years old. Not like the cottage; there used to be a garbage man with a bright yellow pantsuit who came every Tuesday, except for holidays, of course. On holidays we would store the garbage in the tin underneath the house.

"Good morning, Mrs. Thorpe," he would say. His name was Harold Goodman. He had a regular set-up with garbage collecting. He collected garbage in the whole town of Summittville. They used to say he would soon be collecting garbage in Glennburg too.

He had three helpers; they all wore the same yellow pantsuits with red caps. Mr. Goodman never wore a cap. By the time he got to Apple Drive, where our cottage was, his bald head would be bright red and dripping with sweat.

He had one truck. It was bright yellow. As soon as he got another truck (they said he had ordered one from Pittsburgh), he would start collecting garbage in Glennburg. "Harry Goodman," they used to say, "he'll be collecting garbage from all of upstate New York if he can buy enough yellow paint for those trucks." I don't think I've seen a yellow garbage truck like Mr. Goodman's in a while.

Mrs. O'Brian lives across the alley on the eleventh floor of her building, so sometimes I can see her cleaning dishes in her kitchen. She scrapes the crusts into a plastic sack. Kids never eat the crusts. I remember mine. They used to peel the crust from around the edges so they had a long strip of it. Oh how they would tease the cat with those crusts! They made him jump higher and higher, then around in circles, always teasing, so in the end at least one of them would have a long red scratch on his arm or neck. After they tore off the crust they would eat around the sandwich in circles until they reached the middle, then they would push the circle-shaped peach jam sandwich onto their middle finger and suck it in their mouth. Mrs. O'Brien takes that plastic sack and throws it out the window into the alley. She could never hit anyone. No one walks down there anymore.

Before Jonathan and I got married we would walk through Willett Park. There was a ring of trees around Timber Lake. They used to call the walk around the lake "Sweethearts' Stroll". The water was always too cold to swim in, and Mother always told me to wear a sweater when Jonathan came to take me out for a walk. "No need to be shivering when you're out walking with a gentleman," she would say, "he'll get friendlier if he thinks you're chilly". So I would wear my blue sweater over my shoulders when Jonathan came to call. I was a lady.

And he was such an eye-catcher. When Jonathan walked down the street, heads would turn. His shoes were always of the latest fashion, and always polished. His sleeves were always cuffed and pinned. Never would Jonathan roll his sleeves up his arms like other men, like Mr. Goodman, when his bald head was dripping.

Jonathan was a gentleman. He worked in Pittsfield in an office building, filing papers and meeting with important people.

After we were married, Jonathan would drive the machine to Pittsfield to work. I loved Summittville. I didn't want to leave Mother to go to the city. Jonathan understood; he would drive to Pittsfield early in the morning and would arrive home late at night. I would warm his dinner for him.

Mrs. O'Brian lives alone now with her children, two little girls and a baby boy. I know because I can see her kitchen from my window. I watch her feed and dress the baby and throw the dirty diapers into the alley. Mrs. O'Brian used to have a man in the kitchen with her sometimes; not anymore. He was tall and dark. He didn't speak English too well. The baby came after he left. I haven't seen Mrs. O'Brian smile for a while.

When Maggie was to be married she had the prettiest smile you could ever see. She was my eldest daughter and she was a lady, not like the other two. Oh, what a pretty bride she was. We wove lillies-of-the-valley into her bright red curls. She married in the same chapel I did. We had so many flowers, so many roses. Thomas Pickett was his name. He was quite a gentleman—perfect for my Maggie, perfect.

At night they turn on the flashing signs. There is no moon, like in Summittville, only the bright flashing signs. And it's so noisy! The machines move faster now and they are louder. All night the signs flash and all night the people drive loudly. There is no electricity in B-11, my room. I have a bag, a paper one with handles. It says "Garcia's Grocery" on its side. I keep all the old pictures in there. There is even a picture of Maggie on her wedding day. They are safe in there. It's not as cold since I put the newspaper in the cracks of the window. But there still is no moon, only a bright flashing light: "Coke is it."

AN INCIDENT

Awakened by the raucous cry of jays,
we found the young bird dead
beneath the patient claws
of our green-eyed executioner.
Three kittens to feed,
another crushed beneath a thoughtless car,
these factors must excuse her,
merely one agent of larger cruelties.
But small images of violence are precise
and easily unnerve us,
lingering and coloring the day.
Perhaps this can explain
the vision of mortality evoked
by women slowly climbing stairs
or children surging quickly through a game.
The day broods itself into a storm,
and rain punishes the streets,
while trees tear out their leaves.
Thunder speaks our fear and rage
in its electric shout and guttural rumble.
At night, we eat and rest in silence;
listening to the wind and rain, we wait.
By morning, much has been swept away;
trees are bowed in a green prayer,
but the angry sky remains,
and we wonder—what beauty in such darkness?


MEATS + POULTRY

ONE THING WAITS

That those two young men
not be behind their counter
Monday morning,
not be smiling, weary, pouring out
the coffee.
Or that I might not be there.

That First Ave. of puffed and elbowed
elegance, of congealing traffic,
that it not be there puffing,
elbowing. Or that I not be there.

That the fat superintendent not be
leaning on his stoop, smoking,
his face a pool of dammed-up sleep.
Or that I might not be passing by
to see.

That 77th St. not glare
in sharp spring light,
that people not be walking,
pointing their physical faces
toward work. Or that all this
might be, and I not see it,
that someone else be walking here,
worried, leaning on the world,
and I another place, unseeing.

That all these worlds not be
within my sight forever.
That these do not wait always,
That I do not wait either.

That only one thing waits, forever.

AS IF TIME

I am impatient with old men who talk
as if talk were life,
as if life were abrupt,
as if the passing seconds gleamed
before their eyes and knowledge
made them talk like this,
as if they were tired.
I am impatient with old men's talk
that spills like sticky syrup,
that numbs like an overheated room,
that trickles between associations,
that answers anything with everything
and will *not* be hurried,
and *is* expansive,
and I am impatient with old men who talk
as if talk were life, as if life
were time, as if time were so important.

Doug Aylsworth 29

OCTOBER SONG

The sun's golden orgies of summer
have unwound
as harrows' mists rise in hieratic gesture
over burnished fields
and gaunt leaves waver on creaking limbs,
where the quaver of the thrush
becomes the soliloquy of time
steeped in its autumn mood,
bent toward the dark, cowled wings of the sky.

The ascetic season visits the heart
and the song I take is the melody of wind
sweeping spirit's tatterdemalion edge,
and the garb I take is the rain-spat shadow
drawn long and stark beneath my step,
the coarse hood of my mortality,
I, the mendicant of seasons,
crying the devotions of my heart
in the wild grasses of my summer sowing,
in the full of the pale October moon.

Dearest Fader and Mather,

I praye for and thinke of thee bothe oft. I taketh this time to give thanks to thee bothe for having been offered with suche a noble dowry to suche a propre and honourable hous. My carrere at Wessex has been al so certain and holdes suche digne of reverence. I write to telleth thee bothe of grete newes. The Prioresse of Wessex hath graunted to me the office of Cellaresse. This avance is ful of prestige and flaterye.

As Cellaresse, I have in my charge oure hous farm and the laboures of oure feeldes. I shal direct servants to their repaires and laboures to their heying and hervest. My newe bisinesse holdes bothe autumn and spring plowynge and sowynge, the hey croppe and the hervest. The Cellaresse shal taketh charge of the festis final feeste of hervest. It is suche a noble plesure to entertene. At this feeste I graunt a goos unto al labourers who overtorneth their loads nought during the hervest.

Fader and Mather, thee bothe must visit me and I shal showe my charges in ful. We coulde rid ful faire, over my feeldes, on my stedes and biside us my grete grehoundes shal runne.

Oure Diocesan telleth me that a Cellaresse coulde lead her hous into ruin through an ill hervest and fals reportes. My charges shal be graunted unto a custode if I faile this courtly hous.

My peculium shal staye the same. Yit the gretteste newes, my pituance rose 3d. heigher. Through my peculium, newe pituance and the sale of my manye embrouded linens I shal keepe silken wimpels and pinched robes without entred graundefader's handsom legacie.

We weare oure wimpels lifted since heigh brow is the facion. I beleve I have the moste possesiouns in the hous since my beloved aunt Claire left to me a legacie of fine jewelis. Since my chambre is moste festisly aornemented I oft see jalousye from the other wommen.

I shal telleth thee bothe of a late and humourous chirche sermoun that bigan with an exemplum of pituance. Oure abbot saide: "A pituance was passed by the Prioresee to the entire hous. The Cellaresse by som chance was passed over. This noble Cellaresse bore this faute with pacience. The Grete Fader set bifore hir an invisible pituance. She was so ful of the Fader that she desireth no pituance for al hir dayes."* I chiden oure abbot for this absurde exemplum. Woulde thee ever thinke that anyoon coulde abandone their pituance for the Sweetness of the Lord? I claimeth grete neede for pituance alonge with al the wommen at Wessex hous.

Wessex of late has approved of some yonge girles of good vertu and heigh parage. I heerd that they cometh with handsom legacies and rich dowries. Oure Diocesan teches us to avoyd suche gossyp but even as a womman has a newe carved sho al of the other wommen shal taketh of and be jalous of hir.

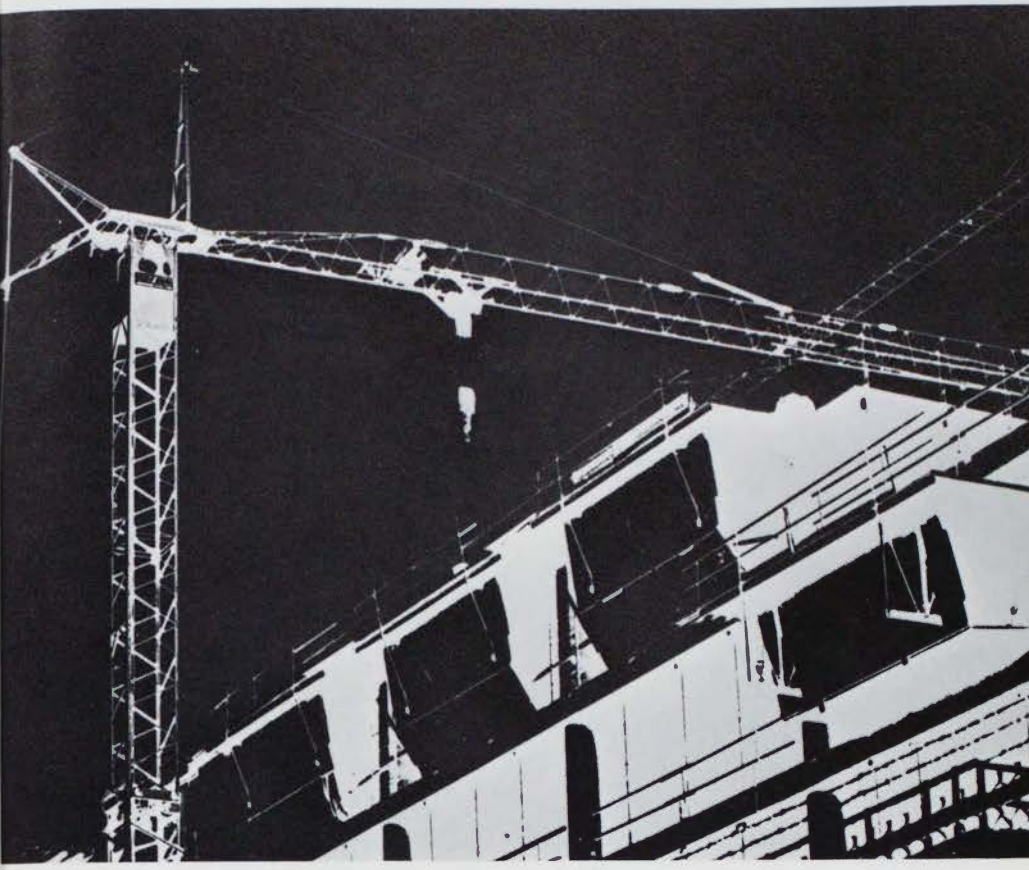
Fader and Mather, I by my fay thanke thee bothe for offrynge me to suche a riche and honourable hous. My carrere at Wessex has beene of suche heigh parage. This noble office, Cellaresse, will suretee me digne al my dayes at Wessex. I am trewely plesid to have graunted grete newes unto thee bothe from this gentil place.

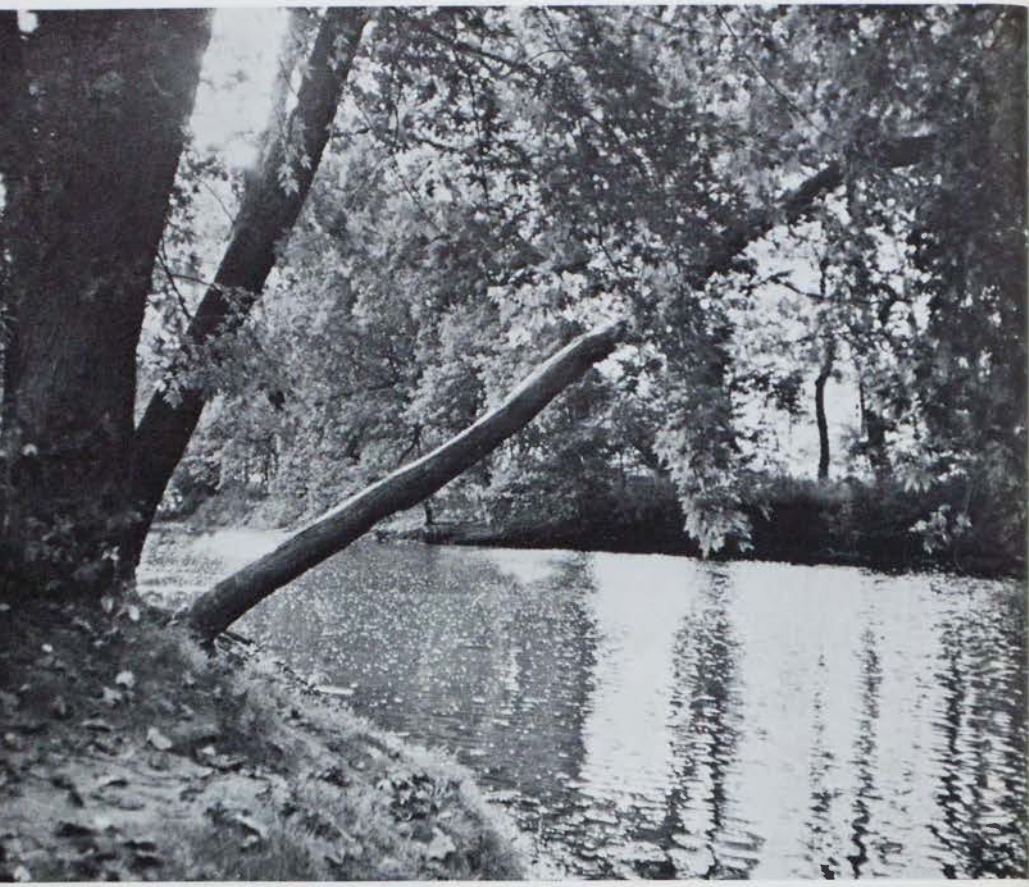
Noble Cellaresse of Wessex

*Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1964), p. 522.

THE GHOST OF MARKET STREET

I know his aimless beat, the ghost of Market Street.
I know the fall of the shadow from the long gray-yellow hair
unkept to his shoulders and his long Salvation Army coat
and the long fingernails
and the slump to his tall stand
and the way well-dressed strangers with well-laid plans
avoid him drifting there near the drugstore.
Each night drunk he walks past well-lit homes
and well-locked doors
shadowing the walls
shadowing the gates
shadowing the steps of nowhere direction
with eyes that see nothing at all.
I know the beat, the ghost of Market Street.





THAT HELD HER,
EVEN THEN IN AMBIGUOUS EMBRACE

The four-eyed, bucktoothed, almost autistic child
still looks from his desk
in Miss Shoop's kindergarten hell,
amazed at his bearded issue
who now picks up his latest book
to assure himself
it is his
and no other's.
He has children,
he has light,
has dark,
has been moved by evening's music,
lessons of the dawn,
and profound school of the night,
but still is he amazed
as when his father
first showed him the sea
from the beaches of Manisquan
and saw his sister
first ride the waves, wondrous
in initiate joy
below the sun,
then disappear
into prophecying process
that held her, even then,
in ambiguous embrace.

LIQUID NIGHT

Today, I remembered twice the night
I dreamed but could not sleep,
when rain made mountain runnels
of the gutters and wind savaged the trees.

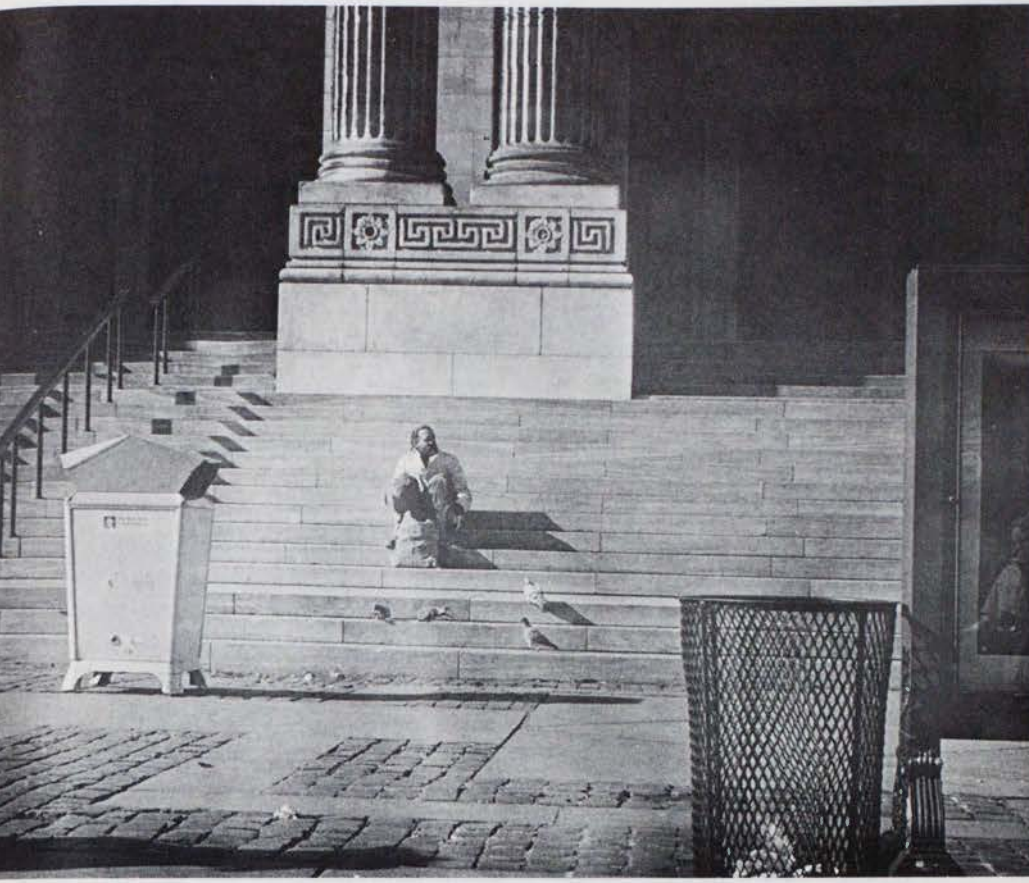
Sleep fled from me, downstairs, hiding from the storm.
Through purple air, smooth beads dropped
from tomato leaves, tiny yellow blossoms,
hard bulbs of solid green, back into the thirsty garden
dirt. Mud splattered the broken-back stream
of a driveway, flowing in all directions.

Water showered the windows.
Stealthily I turned on the dining room light,
fearing its beams would scurry under
my sleeping father's door and wake him,
breathing in his own storm,
like air-conditioned lightning.

I felt you outside in the orchard, waiting,
a moon orbiting me, standing nude to the dark,
white like a frozen bottle of milk,
sweet vessel of dreams, while leaves carefully
dropped water onto your tight skin,
dripping, dripping liquid night into you.

I wanted to come join you and
lie down together in the fleshy ravine,
two branches rinsed in a black rain,
floating on puddles like ravaged flower petals.
But I knew you too would hide from me
when I stepped out of the light.

In the study, it was quiet at the desk;
no cacophony of lawn mowers, children,
dogs, and cars leaked through the window.
I liked the night then;
I couldn't help but dream.
Swiftly my head was overrun with
black ants tunneling into the night,
forever hollowing the soil, forever displacing the dark,
until I, a sleeping miserable cur,
awoke to silence.



CREATIVITY AND METAPHOR

by

Robert Sweeney

The occasion of these reflections is the appearance in a recent issue of the *New York Times Book Review* of a review of Howard Gardner's new book, *Art, Mind and Brain: A Cognitive Approach to Creativity*. Written by Edward Rothstein, music critic of the *Times*, the review is titled "Where Does Art Come From?" Since creativity is a concern of all of us, in whatever discipline or art form or walk of life we find ourselves, I felt stimulated to add a few animadversions to a complex interdisciplinary question.

Rothstein's review, though appreciative of the effort and expertise involved in the book's writing, is basically critical, largely on the grounds of it being too narrowly based on cognitive psychological theory. He complains of a repetitiveness resulting from the fact that the book is composed of articles already published in various publications. I wish to focus on one such article, co-authored by Gardner with Ellen Winner and entitled "The Development of Metaphoric Competence: Implications for Humanistic Disciplines," since it presents their research in an incisive way. Essentially, they are claiming that the key to creativity is metaphor.

Gardner and Winner's approach is based on developmental cognitive psychology, which attempts to explain metaphor and its implications in the framework of the stages of development

outlined by Piaget and others. Some of their research strategies are ingenious. For example, in testing metaphorical production, they designed "renaming" tasks in which children (3-5 yrs.) were presented with diverse stimuli, such as familiar and unfamiliar objects, line drawings, color swatches, etc., and asked to design "pretend names" to be spoken by the puppets they were holding. The children also made outrageous comparisons ("quiet as a nose," "sad as a shirt"), but in general the researchers concluded that they "fashioned significantly more appropriate metaphors" than 7-8 year olds or even college students. Metaphor at an early age!

Such results lend ready credability to the wide-spread thesis that young children demonstrate a spontaneity and unpredictability (therefore creativity) that are thwarted by a repressive society as they grow up. When Gardner and Winner tested *comprehension* of metaphors, however, the results were quite different. With phrases such as "the prison guard had become a hard rock," the children only gradually learned meaning and not until well into adolescence did they demonstrate a sense for the psychological states involved. The competency displayed here, the authors conclude, is really not one of vocabulary (lexical) knowledge, but of sensitivity to context.

Now it is the putative discrepancy discovered between the ages at which metaphors are produced and the ages at which they are understood, that needs some further anaylsis. In designing their research, the authors utilized a theory of metaphor based on the "tensive" approach associated with philosophers such as Black, Beardsley and Berggren. Whereas traditional theory understands metaphor as an abbreviated simile belonging to the order of ornamentation—hence substitutable by paraphrase—the tensive theory finds it to be essentially the interaction of a discordant subject and predicate, hence the generation of a new meaning irreducible to literal paraphrase. This theory not only has greater philosophical plausibility, but it also lends itself to the kind of psychological testing in which reduction of tension can be used as a measure of the comprehension of a metaphor. But when used this way, the theory does not resolve the paradox of age discrepancy.

The tension involved can be further analyzed in terms of a conflict of semantic fields—a "semantic impertinence" or deliberate "category mistake." Paul Ricoeur has shown indeed that at the center of the metaphor there is a copula that is both an "is" and "is not" at the same time. It is this negation—the negation of ordinary reference that opens up a "second-order"

reference to new combinations—that constitutes the metaphor's challenge to establish categories and provides the precondition for the insight into similitude that Aristotle considered to be the mark of genius.

Now the precondition for the control of such negation is the training in semantic fields that we consider literal precision. This precision is essentially learned at the "technical stage" of pre-adolescence (if it is learned at all). According to Bernard Boelen, this is the stage (ages 10 to 12—but it can vary in length as well as intensity) when the child organizes his or her world along lines of maximum quantification and efficiency (e.g., fascination with baseball averages)—and with a smoothness that will be forced to yield to the onslaught of the "negative stage" to come.

What follows from this is that metaphor is not really found prior to adolescence. Thus the apparent discrepancy between the age of producing and that of understanding metaphor is resolved by recognizing that metaphors produced before adolescence are accidental creations detected by sympathetic adults. (No child prodigies in poetry!) But even on the consoling hypothesis that productive late adolescence can last until age 30, this thesis does not mean that anyone is automatically creative for having successfully navigated the pitfalls of the negative stage; such success would represent only the necessary (not at all sufficient) condition, for becoming creative. There is much more involved.

This last point is essentially the one that Rothstein makes against Gardner in complaining about cognitivism, without realizing that the metaphorical model need not be narrowly congitivist. Ricoeur has shown, for example, how imagination and feeling are both involved actively in the production of metaphor. When Rothstein also complains that the universalisms of Chomsky and Levi-Strauss are not accommodated by Gardner's theory, he is not realizing that they could be implied in a broader application of the theory. And even Freudian ideas can be integrated into the metaphorical model if one recognizes that metaphor overlaps with, and is ultimately rooted, in symbol and instinctual and cosmic dynamisms.

My hesitant conclusion, therefore, is that the metaphorical model for understanding and explaining creativity has more viability than Gardner & Winner's research indicates or Rothstein's impatience permits. But such a conclusion is really only a referee's way of trying to separate two boxers while avoiding their well-aimed roundhouses.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WEIGHT
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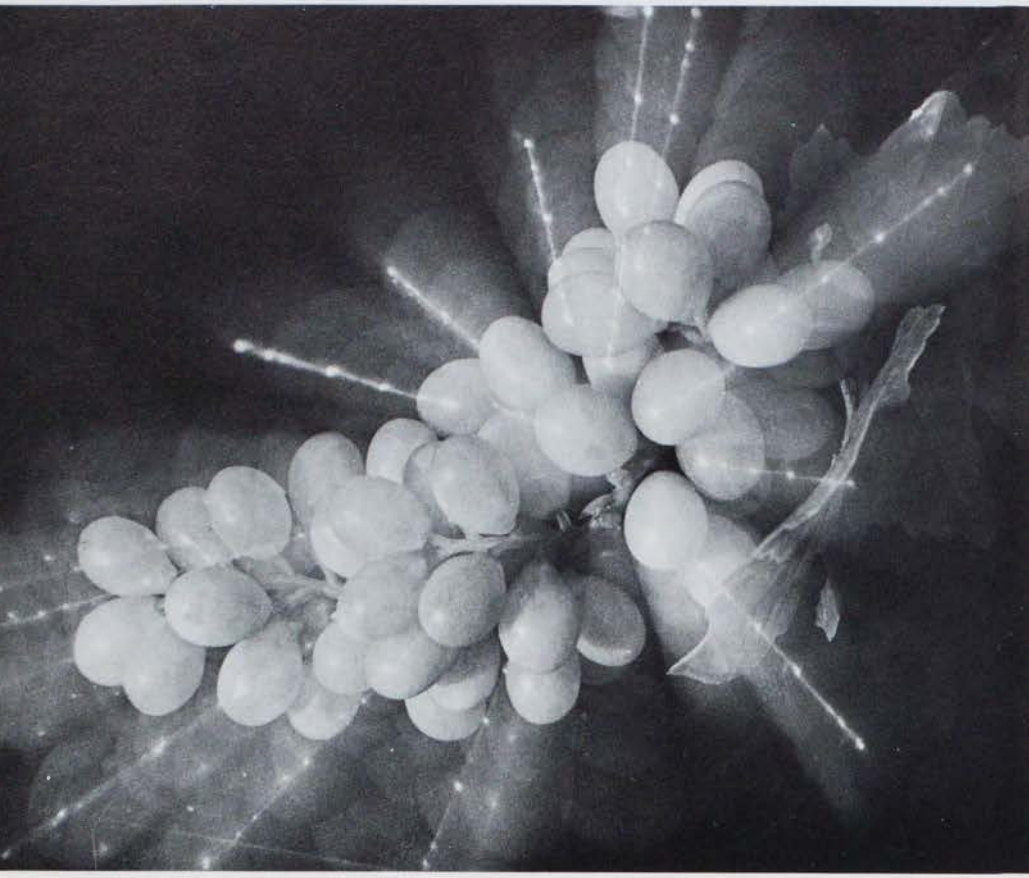

APOTHEOSIS

It must have been a dream of light
filtering through the aqueous sky
that teased the dark, horned reptile
to trundle on granitic thigh
out of the ocean night

and throw up intrepid wings
like an angel flung in the forbidding sky,
careening about the golden eye
of the sun.

When at last the sea calls,
like the gull let me skim the waters
in an insouciance of wings,
hoarse with the cry of myself,
free-fallen from the giddy eminence of light
singed with the color of the sun.

BOUQUET

Girls you never wooed
never brought flowers,
but others come, nonetheless,
unsolicited,
from everywhere, in droves,
lovers of a purer sort than wives or mistresses;
these faithful ones who knew you
know death has widowed them
as sure as if they slept in your bed of dreams
a hundred years.

Reverent in eulogy, buttressed in pain,
they gather in the crooked circle of stillness
you have left them
to mime your wit and license,
brag your scholar's hijinks;
they flaunt your recent insult's pain
as if the chance to watch them wince anew
might tempt you back again.

It was the wry imperfect in you they loved,
the stuttered elegance of tongue,
the quirked blue bend of genius in irreverent eye.
It was how you jabbed and poked at mortised words,
flared them into light
to find at night on rain-slicked London streets,
in Broadway's neon gloom.
You proved the rhapsody of art
as nothing more or less in metaphor
than some green, old canvas sack of life,
bulged and tattered, slung across
the shoulder of a stocky man,
straps straining at pudged fingers,
then flung to life upon a desk
as if it had a heart in it
(or some blue jewels).

Girls you never wooed
never brought flowers,
but others come—
and the mortician's room,
oblong, sterile,
fractures now to scarlet petals
torn piece by piece—
like poems once in a book
pressed and stale,
a thousand separate hearts—
which vibrate now
but now again,
suddenly,
something like life in its epitome,
or something like you,
are gone.

IT CRIES FOR MUSIC

by

Joseph T. Cotter

*Editor's Note: Except in the cryptic remarks he inked in the margins of papers and bluebooks, Professor Joseph Cotter left little written evidence of the keen wit and penetrating insight so familiar to his students. The essay which follows, published in the *Carroll Quarterly*, Winter, 1968, is a rare and fine example that Mr. Cotter's in-class versatility was readily transferred to prose analysis. We reprint it here not because it portrays the passing of the Kennedy era (which it so well captures) but because it preserves in succinct form the Cotter era at John Carroll — its elegance, its testy humor, and above all, its professional and enduring grace.

"Kennedy is dead." The exhilarated proclamation came two weeks before the event in Los Angeles. The assured prophet was George Meany, perhaps gazing into the funhouse mirror of his own ego, perhaps mistaking the flabby and toothless reflection for the militant ghost of the John L. Lewis of the Wilkie campaign. No more vatic utterances were to be heard this year from the grave of the American labor movement. Mr. Meany, who is said to be proud of never having conducted a strike, was last seen limping in the Humphrey parade to miraculous defeat.

The prophet, who has some of the old-fashioned political grace and Irish charm of Mayor Daley, spoke with the deadly literalism of the Delphic oracle. Not only are two bearers of the Kennedy image violently dead, but the image itself seems to have been inadvertently destroyed as a real factor in American life. During the fall campaign William Scranton reported from a fact-finding mission made by Richard Nixon, who is nothing if not open-minded about public images, that Europeans were repelled by the "crude and incredible" Johnson, that they could not buy the current model of Nixon. What they wanted, with pathetic and

desperate nostalgia in a time when mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, a time of riots and political murder, was John F. Kennedy, whom they considered "civilized and cultured — almost like a European."

The deadly realities of the new age of dullness make clear to Americans how fanciful, how foreign is the notion of a revival of the qualities which Europeans associate with John Kennedy or even the special kind of passionate commitment manifest in the last days of Robert Kennedy.

The irrelevance of either Kennedy image to the new day, when justice is to be viewed as "incidental to law and order," is established in the fact that either sacred name could be invoked, according to need, by the candidates — not only by Humphrey and Nixon, but even George Wallace. The use of the Kennedy icon had become as meaningless and as unscrupulous as waving a flag. But, in a year of extensive flag-burning, its use in the campaign does suggest the value of the Kennedy image, at least in the minds of the politicians, as a substitute symbol of unification, perhaps as an anesthetic for the violent impulses of desperate minorities, or as an antidote for the illiberal pattern of the nationality vote or the mindless disengagement of the New Left or the rowdy disenchantment of those who think of themselves as American Youth or the bootstrap mythology by which newly "affluent" suburbanites and blue collar bigots attempt to expunge the economic and social shame of their own past.

One almost forgotten element of the pristine Kennedy image before Dallas came to life again in the brief journalistic interlude, the royal masque of the marriage of Jacqueline Kennedy to an archetypal figure who seemed, in the eyes of an expectedly puritan and disturbingly prurient audience, to be a classic Greek translation of Bunyan's Sir Having Greedy of Vanity Fair.

It all came back. In a season when "a rough beast, its hour come at last," slouched out of Yorba Linda toward the White House, it all came back to public consciousness — days and nights as remote as Versailles or the Cafe Royal. The thousand days of Kennedy high comedy: the drama of good manners and understated self-mockery; the *fete champetre* at Mount Vernon, a triumph of elegance and DDT; the busy swimmimg pool at Hickory Hill; Leonard Bernstein weeping like a Restoration gallant at the presence of Pablo Casals in a refurbished White House once hallowed by the command performances of Fred

Waring and Tommy the Cork; art, cuisine, and good tailoring; happy press conferences and boating mishaps; the unabashed pride in "having had a good war" and the charmed peace and poverty workers on the lawn; Caroline's pony and the first lady hurtling from a hesitant horse over a hunt-club fence.

The Kennedy comedy of manners was an all too temporary triumph over the normal American preference for the more deeply rooted, more native comedy of humors, which is now back on the road: frontier boorishness now updated into a political and academic tactic, programmed responses now turned into policy, and the neutralist social pallor of corporate types moving, with carefully unregional accents, from defrosted meatloaf to the expense-account splurge. High comedy is as remote as Camelot.

The extent to which the relevance of the Kennedy image has been shattered by the numbing consequences of two pointless acts of the public violence of our time is suggested when one examines what Kennedy admirers in 1963 thought the image was. An essay written for the *Quarterly* after Dallas saw the image as a calculated one, consciously projected at least to the degree that any public personality is. On the other hand, the Kennedy image was seen, in the context of the time, as a courageous challenge to the images which had worked for politicians in an earlier decade of dullness — "cloying togetherness, amiable mediocrity, and simplistic belligerence." These had been especially effective in a political period dominated by old men on executive pensions and young fogies trying to get a piece of the same corporate and country-club action.

The three phrases, so patronizingly repudiated in the thousand days, have, it is now clear, taken new wing and in 1968 have come home to the public-relations roost. "Cloying togetherness, amiable mediocrity, and simplistic belligerence" seem, with some updating, a summary of the campaign styles of the surviving candidates of 1968 — Democratic, Republican, and American Slob. In the homey gaucherie of this election year we saw the aged Democratic device of convenient togetherness for strange bedfellows become brutal and shrill; we saw the old Republican nostrum of Coolidge mediocrity become a permanent instant replay of organized balloons and drill majorettes moved to pubertal frenzy to shield the faceless candidate from public questions. Even the Wallace crowd, remaining generally loyal to the old American simplicities, reduced the crudity of unabashed

hatred and social terror to a simple language.

For the Kennedy image it has been a rough, although not altogether destructive, five years. The first open and shattering blow, as distinguished from the polysyllabic sniping of William Buckley and the magpie scholarship of Victory Lasky, came in the sad comedy of errors incidental to the publication of William Manchester's book. However, until the long day's journey between St. Patrick's and Arlington Cemetery, a large public nurtured a comforting anticipation of an updated Camelot — less social and aesthetic, but even more lively and athletic. The paradoxical measure of our half-conscious expectation that this was a comforting but impossible dream was the tragic acceptance, by practically everyone who cared, of the inevitability, by one bizarre and graceless means or another, of Robert Kennedy's destruction.

So, on a bright Wednesday morning we settled down to TV for a new production of an old show, laying in an adequate supply of snacks and feeling more than slightly uneasy about not being shocked into the wordless grief of the first time. The *media* (a word that has become ugly and singular in the five years) went into rehearsed doomsday with a clown mayor, show-biz anecdotalists, Irish poets, and appreciative professional reviews of the music and ritual.

The old Kennedy hands showed for the last time, in a not unnoted parody of the Cuban crisis, their unmatched skill at coalescing to improvise splendor and to provide occasions for national catharsis. We each have a number of scenes we can never forget and do not want to forget. It was a national happening that worked.

The Camelot image was a fusion of what Robert Frost called Harvard and Irish. It is hardly remembered now that the most important fact about John Kennedy before the Nixon debates was that he was not only a Roman Catholic, but Irish; indeed, one Indiana evangelist after a quiet encounter in a courthouse corridor pictured him as an "Irish roughneck," presumably Studs Lonigan in a Brooks-Brothers suit. On the other hand, Mr. Nixon, who in blood is equally Irish, suffered by his resemblance to everyone's idea of a YMCA secretary addressing the good fellows of a men's bible class. In any case, 1960 was probably the last year that the American People of God felt the need to be on their best ecclesiastical behavior before a Protestant majority.

What Frost meant, of course, was the alliance in an individual of the Boston line of paternalistically ruthless Irish "leaders" and the Boston Brahmin sense of the political vocation of the beautiful rich. Mayor Daley's archaic and ponderous cuteness, in packing galleries for his own acclaim and in smothering the belligerent aftermath of the Kennedy tribute at the 1968 convention by staging a hurried ceremony for Martin Luther King, has, I think, destroyed whatever attractiveness the Irish-Mafia side of the Kennedy image ever had. The jowls of complacency, brutality, and stupidity can no longer be concealed from even the most sentimental.

The Brahmin side remains as something we properly miss. It was invoked with some success by Edward Kennedy to win back some of the ethnic and blue collar voters who had been prepared to vote their prejudices. The two dead Kennedys aimed, in Newman's words, "at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life." In terms of government the Brahmin side means the presence in national power of educated gentlemen to dominate and control the servile operatives — the blinkered technicians, the social engineers, the glorified cops, the economic seers, the payroll meeters, and the military tradesmen.

In 1963 that seemed to many of us what we were about to lose. We had no idea how great the loss or even the memory was to be in five succeeding years of verbal and military overkill.

Perhaps Robert Kennedy's peculiar portion of the Kennedy image is closer to the memory and aspiration of a new time.

> By birth he ranked
> With the most noble, but unto the poor
> Among mankind he was in service bound,
> As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
> To a religious order. Man he loved
> As man; and, to the mean and obscure,
> And all the homely in their homely works,
> Transferred a courtesy which had no air
> Of condescension; but did rather seem
> A passion and a gallantry . . .

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